

FRECKLES

By
Gene Stratton-
Porter

COPYRIGHT, 1904, BY DOUBLEDAY,
PAGE & CO.

CHAPTER V.

FRECKLES FACES TRICKLE.

COMING from a long day on the trail, Freckles saw Duncan, children awaiting him much closer than the swan, than they usually ventured, and from their wild gestures he knew that something had happened. He broke into a run, but the cry that reached him was, "The books have come!"

They found books on birds, trees, flowers, moths and butterflies. There was also one containing Freckles' bullfrog, true to life. And besides these a tin specimen box, a bottle of gasoline, a box of cotton, a paper of long steel specimen pins and a letter telling what all these things were and how to use them.

At the discovery of each new treasure Freckles shouted, "Will you be looking at this now?" Mrs. Duncan cried, "Well, I'm drawn out!"

When Freckles started for the trail next morning the shining new specimen box flashed on his back. The black "chickadee," a note which in the time, carried the gleam of it and was dried what it was. The faded net hung by the boy's hatchet, and the bird book was in the box. He walked the line and tested each section scrupulously, watching every foot of the trail, for he was determined not to slight his work. But if ever a boy made haste slowly, in a hurry it was Freckles that morning. When at last he reached the swamp he had redoubled and lifted up around his ears his head swelled with the pride of possessing even so much that he could call his own.

He had made a large camp with the door of the specimen box on one side of it. The three sides of the box were of wild rose obtained in the lower branch of the trees. Part of his walls were yellow, part white, then, willow and dandelion. Below them filled in a solid mass of pale pink, then, yellow and yellow. St. John's wort, while the other threads of the dandelion interlarded everywhere. At one side the swamp came close and cattails grew in profusion. In front of them he had planted a row of water hyacinths without disturbing in the least the state of their azure bloom, and where the ground rose higher for his floor a row of foxglove that would soon be open.

To the left he had discovered a queer natural arrangement of the trees that grew to giant size and were set in a gradually narrowing space so that a long, open vista stretched away until lost in the distance of the swamp. A little trimming back of underbrush rolling off of dead logs, leveling of floor and carpeting of moss, made it easy to understand why Freckles had named this the "cathedral," yet he had never been taught that the groves were God's first temples.

On either side of the trees that constituted the first arch of this dim vista of the swamp he planted ferns that grew waist high this early in the season, and so skillfully had the work been done that not a foot dropped because of the change. Opposite he cleared a space and made a flowerbed. Every day saw the addition of new specimens.

On the line side he left the bushes thick for concealment and entered by a narrow path and Duncan had cleared in setting up the camp. He called this the front door, though he reserved every precaution to hide it. He built a small table between several of the trees, leveled the floor and thickly carpeted it with rank, heavy woolly dog moss. About the case he planted wild daisies, bittersweet and wild grapevines and trained them over it until it was almost covered.

This morning Freckles walked straight to his case, unlocked it and set his apparatus and dinner inside. He took out the birdbook, turned to the section headed "V." Post "very" and "vireo" he went on down the line until his finger, trembling with eagerness, stopped at "vulture."

"Great black California vulture," he read. "Humph! This side the Rockies will do for us."

"Common turkey buzzard?"

"Well, we ain't hunting common turkeys," McLean said, chuckling, and what he says goes."

"Black vulture of the south?"

"Here we are arrived at once," Freckles' finger followed the line, and he read scraps aloud.

"Common in the south. Sometimes called Jim Crow. Nearest equivalent to Caribbees A-tr-a-t-a-t."

"The Pharaoh's chickens of European species. Sometimes stray north as far as Virginia and Kentucky."

"And sometimes farther," interrupted Freckles, "yes I got them right near in Indiana so like those pictures I can just see me big chicken bobbing up to get his ears stuck. Hey?"

"Light blue eggs?"

"Golly, I got to be seeing them?"

"—big as a common turkey's, but shaped like a hen's, heavily spotted with chocolate."

"Carnels, I suppose. And—"

"—in hollow logs or stumps?"

"Oh, haggis! Wasn't I harking up the wrong tree though? Ought to be looking near the ground all this time. Now it's all to do over, and I suspect the sooner I start the sooner I'll be likely to find them."

feel if his revolver and hatchet were there, caught up his cudgel and laid it across his knees, then sat quietly waiting. Was it Black Jack, or some one even worse? Forced to do something to brace his nerves, he puckered his stiffening lips and began whistling a tune he had led in his clear tenor every year of his life at the home Christmas exercises.

His quick Irish wit roused to the ridiculousness of it and he burst into a laugh that steadied him amazingly. Through the bushes he caught a glimpse of the oncoming figure. His heart flooded with joy, for it was a man from the game. Wessner had been his bunk mate the night he came down the canyon. This was no time to be shy. Freckles sprang up and called cheerily, a warm welcome on his face.

"Well, it's good telling if you're glad to see me!" said Wessner. "We been hearing down at the camp you were so mighty touchy you didn't allow a man within a rod of the line."

"No more do I," answered Freckles, "if he's a stranger, but you're from McLean, ain't you?"

"Oh, course McLean," said Wessner. Freckles gripped the cudgel. "And are you really saying so?" he inquired with elaborate politeness.

"Yes, I am," said Wessner. "So would every other man of the gang if they wasn't too big towards to say anything unless maybe that other scoundrel old Scotchman Duncan, Grindie the lives out of us! Working us like dogs and paying us starvation wages, while he rolls up his millions and lives like a prince!"

Green lights began to play through the gray of Freckles' eyes.

"Wessner," he said, "you'd make a fine pattern for the rest of these boys. Every man on that gang is strong and lithe, paid all he earns and treated with the courtesy of a gentleman. As for the boss, living like a prince, he shares his work with every day of his life."

Wessner was not a born diplomat, but he saw he was on the wrong track, and he tried another.

"Freckles, old fellow," he said, "if you let me give you a pointer I can put you on to making a real live bird drover without stepping out of your tracks."

Freckles drew back.

"You needn't be afraid of speaking up," he said. "There isn't a soul in the lumberlost who'd hurt you, and the boss ain't coming of your sort's come along unless he's crowding the privileges of the best timber."

"None of my friends along," said Wessner. "Nobody know I came but Black Jack I mean a friend of mine. If you want to hear sense and get with reason he can see you later, but it ain't necessary. We can make all the plans needed. The trick's so dead snail and easy."

"Must be if you have the engineering of it," said Freckles. But he heard with a sigh of relief that they were alone.

Wessner was impatient. "You just let it be! Why, only think, Freckles, slavin' away at a measly little \$20 a month, and here is a chance to clear \$200 in a day! You surely won't be the fool to lose it!"

"And how was you proposing for me to state it?" inquired Freckles. "Or am I just to find it laying in me path about the line?"

"That's it, Freckles," blustered the Dutchman. "You're just to find it. You needn't know a thing. You name a morning when you will walk up the west side of the swamp and then turn round and walk back down the same side again and the money is yours. Couldn't anything be easier than that, could it?"

"Depends entirely on the man," said Freckles. The bit of a bark laughing above the swale beside them was not sweeter than the sweetness of his voice. "To some it would seem to come alive and brooding, and to some it would seem to be a last drop of their blood. I can't tell you that. I can't tell you the man that goes into a swamp like that with the lightning bolt for me, for you see, it means to break trust with the boss, and I've served him faithful as I knew. You'd have to be asking the thing very clear to me understanding."

"It's so dead easy," repeated Wessner. "It makes me tired of the simplicity of it. You see, there's a few trees in the swamp that's real gold mines. There's three special. Two are back in, but one's square on the line. Why, your pottering old Scotch fool of a boss nailed the wire to it with his own hands! He never noticed where the bark had been peeled nor saw what it was. If you will stay in this side of the trail just one day you can have it cut, loaded and ready to drive out at night. Next morning you can find it, report and be the luckiest man in the search for us. We know where to fix it all safe and easy. Then McLean has a set up with a couple of the gang that there can't be a raw stump found in the lumberlost. There's plenty of witnesses to swear to it, and I know three that will. There's a cool thousand, and this tree is worth all of that raw. Say, it's a gold mine, I tell you, and just \$200 of it is yours. There's no danger on earth to you, for you've got McLean that bamboozled you could sell out the whole swamp and he'd never mistrust you. What do you say?"

Freckles' soul was satisfied. "Is that all?" he asked.

"No, it ain't," said Wessner. "If you want to have up and be a man and go into the thing for keeps you can make five times that in a week. My friend knows a dozen others who could get out in a few days, and all you'd have to do would be to keep out of sight. Then you could take your money and skip some night and begin life like a gentleman somewhere else. What do you think about it?"

Freckles purred like a kitten.

"'Twould be a rare joke on the boss," he said, "to be stalling from him the very thing he's trusted me to guard and be getting up wages all winter thrown in free. And you're making the pay awful high. Me to be getting five hundred for such a simple little thing as that. You're treating me most royal indeed! It's away beyond all I'd be expecting. Sixteen cents would be a big price for that job. It must be looked into through. Just you wait until I do a minute's turn in the lumberlost and I'll be as hotting you out to the clearing and giving you the answer."

Freckles fired the overhanging bushes and hurried back to the case. He unhooked the specimen box and laid it inside with his hatchet and revolver. He slipped the key in his pocket and went back to Wessner.

"Now for the answer," he said. "Stand up!"

There was iron in his voice, and he was commanding like an outraged general. "Anything you want to be taking off?" he questioned.

Wessner looked the astonishment he felt. "Why, no, Freckles," he said. "Have the goodness to be calling me Mr. McLean," snipped Freckles. "I'm after respectin' the pet name for the use of my friends! You may stand with your back to the light or be taking any advantage you want."

"Why, what do you mean?" spluttered Wessner.

"I'm mainin'," said Freckles tersely. "I'll pick a quarter section of his out of you, and may the Holy Virgin stay me before I leave you here carion, for your carcass would turn the stumps of the chickens!"

Down at the camp that morning Wessner's conduct had been so palpable an excuse to force a discharge that Duncan moved near McLean and whispered, "Think of the boy, sir!"

McLean was so troubled that an hour later he mounted Nellie and followed Wessner to his home in Wildcat Hollow, only to find that he had left there a little before, heading for the lumberlost. McLean rode at top speed. When Mrs. Duncan told him that a man answering Wessner's description had gone down the west side of the swamp near noon he left the mare in her charge and followed on foot. When he heard voices he entered the swamp and silently crept near just in time to hear Wessner whine. "But I can't fight you, Freckles, I ain't doing nothing to you. I'm away faster than you, and you're only one hand."

out to the clearing and giving you the answer."

Freckles fired the overhanging bushes and hurried back to the case. He unhooked the specimen box and laid it inside with his hatchet and revolver. He slipped the key in his pocket and went back to Wessner.

"Now for the answer," he said. "Stand up!"

There was iron in his voice, and he was commanding like an outraged general. "Anything you want to be taking off?" he questioned.

Wessner looked the astonishment he felt. "Why, no, Freckles," he said. "Have the goodness to be calling me Mr. McLean," snipped Freckles. "I'm after respectin' the pet name for the use of my friends! You may stand with your back to the light or be taking any advantage you want."

"Why, what do you mean?" spluttered Wessner.

"I'm mainin'," said Freckles tersely. "I'll pick a quarter section of his out of you, and may the Holy Virgin stay me before I leave you here carion, for your carcass would turn the stumps of the chickens!"

Down at the camp that morning Wessner's conduct had been so palpable an excuse to force a discharge that Duncan moved near McLean and whispered, "Think of the boy, sir!"

McLean was so troubled that an hour later he mounted Nellie and followed Wessner to his home in Wildcat Hollow, only to find that he had left there a little before, heading for the lumberlost. McLean rode at top speed. When Mrs. Duncan told him that a man answering Wessner's description had gone down the west side of the swamp near noon he left the mare in her charge and followed on foot. When he heard voices he entered the swamp and silently crept near just in time to hear Wessner whine. "But I can't fight you, Freckles, I ain't doing nothing to you. I'm away faster than you, and you're only one hand."

CHAPTER VI.

WESSNER GETS A THRESHING.

HE boss crunched among the bushes like a tiger ready to spring, but as Freckles' voice reached him he held himself with the effort of his life to see what mischief was in the boy.

"Don't you be wasting of me good time in the lumberlost of me hands!" howled Freckles. "The strength of me voice will make up for the weakness of me mind, and the size of a cowardly thief don't count. You'll think all the wildcats of the lumberlost is turned loose on you when I come against you, and as for me cause, I come down the canyon like a dirty, filthy scoundrel, and the boss was for taking me up, washing, clothing and feeding me and giving me a home full of love and tenderness, and a master to look to, and good, well earned money in the bank. He's trusting me his heart out, and here comes you, you spotted toad of the big road, and in suits me, as is an honest Irish gentleman, by hinting that you conspire to do me wrong, and you're the one that's fast while you rob him of the thing I was set and paid to guard and then

Again an awful wrenching seized McLean. Freckles stepped back as Wessner, tottering and reeling like a thoroughly drunken man, came toward the creek, looking into it as if wildcats had taken their fill of him.

The culled upon high in air, and, catching it with an expertness not gained by long practice on the line, the boy twisted it a second and, stepping into the trail, followed Wessner. Because Freckles was fresh it was impossible to do it silently, and presently his clear tenor rang out, though there were bad catches where he was hard pressed for breath:

"It was the Dutch! It was the Dutch! Do you think it was the Irish hollered help? Not much!"

It was the Dutch! It was the Dutch! Wessner turned and blundered. "What you following me for? What are you going to do with me?"

Freckles called the lumberlost to witness. "How's that for the lumberlost of a beast? And me troubling myself to show him off me territory with the honors of war!"

Then he changed his tone completely and added, "Believe it's this, Freddy. You see, the boss might come riding down this trail any minute, and the little mare's so wheedlesome that if she'd come on to you in your present state all of a sudden she'd stop that short she'd send Mr. McLean out over the ears of her. No disparagement intended to the sense of the mare!" he added hastily.

Wessner belched a fearful oath, and Freckles laughed merrily.

"That's a sample of the thanks a generous act is always for getting!" he continued. "Here's me gettingtin' me work to escort you out proper, and you saying such awful words. Freddy," he demanded sternly, "do you want me to soap out your mouth? You don't seem to be rendering it, but if you was to back into Mr. McLean in your present state without me there to explain matters the chance is he'd cut the liver out of you, and I shouldn't think you'd be wanting such a fine gentleman as him to see that it's white."

Wessner grew ghastly under his grime and broke into a staggering run. Freckles twisted the baton and stood like a soldier at "attention" until Wessner left the clearing, but it was the last scene of that performance. When the boy turned there was a deadly illness in his face, and his legs wavered like reeds beneath his weight. He staggered back to the case, and opening it, he took out a piece of cloth. He dipped it into the water and, sitting on a bench, he wiped the blood and grime from his face, while his breath sickened with his clinched teeth. He was shivering with pain and excitement in spite of himself. He unbuttoned the cuffs of his right sleeve, and, turning it back, exposed the blue lined, caloused whiteness of his mained arm, now vividly streaked with confusion, while in a series of electric dots the blood oozed slowly. Here Wessner had succeeded in setting his teeth. When Freckles saw what it was he forced himself the kick in the pit of Wessner's stomach.

"Freckles, Freckles," said McLean's voice.

Every care and trouble drove him out of his mind. He was no more a boy for such a purpose.

—New York Sun.

up a little heavier?" he gasped and slipped his ear as he sprang back. Wessner lunged at him in a blind fury. Freckles, seeing an opening, forgot the laws of a gentleman's game and drove the toe of his heavy walking boot into Wessner's middle until he doubled up and fell heavily. In a dash Freckles was on him. For a time McLean could not see what was happening. "Go! Go to him now!" he commanded himself, but so intense was his desire to see the boy win alone that he could not stir.

At last Freckles sprang up and backed away. "Time!" he called like a fury. "He's getting up, Mr. Wessner, and don't be afraid of hitting me. I'll let you throw in an extra hand and let you see me complete satisfaction, all the same. Did you hear me call the limit? Will you get up and be facing me?"

As Wessner struggled to his feet he resembled a hotted, for his clothing was in ribbons and his face and hands streaming blood.

"I—I guess I got enough," he mumbled.

"Oh, do you?" roared Freckles. "Well, this ain't your day. You come on to me ground lying about me boss and intimatin' I'd state from his very pockets. Now, will you be standing up and taking your medicine like a man or getting it poured down the throat of you like a baby? I ain't got enough. This is only just the beginning with me. Be looking out there!"

He sprang against Wessner and sent him falling. He attacked the unresisting figure and fought him until he lay on his back and Freckles had no strength left to lift an arm. Then he rose and stepped back, gasping for breath. With his head bent low and his eyes shut, he lay on his back, and the figure of Wessner lay motionless.

Freckles watched him with regard to eye and saw at last that he was completely exhausted. The best over him and, catching him by the back of the neck, jerked him to his knees. Wessner lifted the face of a whipped man and, feeling further punishment, burst into great shivering sobs, while the tears washed tiny rivulets through the blood and mud. Freckles stepped back, glaring at Wessner, but suddenly the show of anger and the noisy disfiguring red faded from the boy's face. He dabbed at a cut on his temple, from which issued a tiny crimson stream, and jauntily shook back his hair. His face bent on his innocent look of a child, and his voice called that of a trailing dove, but into his eyes came a look of diabolical mischief.

He glanced vaguely about him until he saw his club, seized and twirled it like a drum major, stuck it upright in the mud and marched on tip-toe over to Wessner mechanically, as a puppet worked by a string. Bending over, Freckles reached an arm about Wessner's waist and helped him to his feet.

"Careful, now," he cautioned; "be careful, Freddy. There's danger of your hurting me."

up a little heavier?" he gasped and slipped his ear as he sprang back. Wessner lunged at him in a blind fury. Freckles, seeing an opening, forgot the laws of a gentleman's game and drove the toe of his heavy walking boot into Wessner's middle until he doubled up and fell heavily. In a dash Freckles was on him. For a time McLean could not see what was happening. "Go! Go to him now!" he commanded himself, but so intense was his desire to see the boy win alone that he could not stir.

At last Freckles sprang up and backed away. "Time!" he called like a fury. "He's getting up, Mr. Wessner, and don't be afraid of hitting me. I'll let you throw in an extra hand and let you see me complete satisfaction, all the same. Did you hear me call the limit? Will you get up and be facing me?"

As Wessner struggled to his feet he resembled a hotted, for his clothing was in ribbons and his face and hands streaming blood.

"I—I guess I got enough," he mumbled.

"Oh, do you?" roared Freckles. "Well, this ain't your day. You come on to me ground lying about me boss and intimatin' I'd state from his very pockets. Now, will you be standing up and taking your medicine like a man or getting it poured down the throat of you like a baby? I ain't got enough. This is only just the beginning with me. Be looking out there!"

He sprang against Wessner and sent him falling. He attacked the unresisting figure and fought him until he lay on his back and Freckles had no strength left to lift an arm. Then he rose and stepped back, gasping for breath. With his head bent low and his eyes shut, he lay on his back, and the figure of Wessner lay motionless.

Freckles watched him with regard to eye and saw at last that he was completely exhausted. The best over him and, catching him by the back of the neck, jerked him to his knees. Wessner lifted the face of a whipped man and, feeling further punishment, burst into great shivering sobs, while the tears washed tiny rivulets through the blood and mud. Freckles stepped back, glaring at Wessner, but suddenly the show of anger and the noisy disfiguring red faded from the boy's face. He dabbed at a cut on his temple, from which issued a tiny crimson stream, and jauntily shook back his hair. His face bent on his innocent look of a child, and his voice called that of a trailing dove, but into his eyes came a look of diabolical mischief.

He glanced vaguely about him until he saw his club, seized and twirled it like a drum major, stuck it upright in the mud and marched on tip-toe over to Wessner mechanically, as a puppet worked by a string. Bending over, Freckles reached an arm about Wessner's waist and helped him to his feet.

"Careful, now," he cautioned; "be careful, Freddy. There's danger of your hurting me."

Fishing a handkerchief from a back pocket, Freckles tenderly wiped Wessner's eyes and nose.

"Come, Freddy, me child," he admonished Wessner. "It's time little boys were getting home. I've me little to do and can't be entertaining you any more today. Come back tomorrow if you ain't through yet and we'll repeat the performance."

Again an awful wrenching seized McLean. Freckles stepped back as Wessner, tottering and reeling like a thoroughly drunken man, came toward the creek, looking into it as if wildcats had taken their fill of him.

The culled upon high in air, and, catching it with an expertness not gained by long practice on the line, the boy twisted it a second and, stepping into the trail, followed Wessner. Because Freckles was fresh it was impossible to do it silently, and presently his clear tenor rang out, though there were bad catches where he was hard pressed for breath:

"It was the Dutch! It was the Dutch! Do you think it was the Irish hollered help? Not much!"

It was the Dutch! It was the Dutch! Wessner turned and blundered. "What you following me for? What are you going to do with me?"

Freckles called the lumberlost to witness. "How's that for the lumberlost of a beast? And me troubling myself to show him off me territory with the honors of war!"

Then he changed his tone completely and added, "Believe it's this, Freddy. You see, the boss might come riding down this trail any minute, and the little mare's so wheedlesome that if she'd come on to you in your present state all of a sudden she'd stop that short she'd send Mr. McLean out over the ears of her. No disparagement intended to the sense of the mare!" he added hastily.

Wessner belched a fearful oath, and Freckles laughed merrily.

"That's a sample of the thanks a generous act is always for getting!" he continued. "Here's me gettingtin' me work to escort you out proper, and you saying such awful words. Freddy," he demanded sternly, "do you want me to soap out your mouth? You don't seem to be rendering it, but if you was to back into Mr. McLean in your present state without me there to explain matters the chance is he'd cut the liver out of you, and I shouldn't think you'd be wanting such a fine gentleman as him to see that it's white."

Wessner grew ghastly under his grime and broke into a staggering run. Freckles twisted the baton and stood like a soldier at "attention" until Wessner left the clearing, but it was the last scene of that performance. When the boy turned there was a deadly illness in his face, and his legs wavered like reeds beneath his weight. He staggered back to the case, and opening it, he took out a piece of cloth. He dipped it into the water and, sitting on a bench, he wiped the blood and grime from his face, while his breath sickened with his clinched teeth. He was shivering with pain and excitement in spite of himself. He unbuttoned the cuffs of his right sleeve, and, turning it back, exposed the blue lined, caloused whiteness of his mained arm, now vividly streaked with confusion, while in a series of electric dots the blood oozed slowly. Here Wessner had succeeded in setting his teeth. When Freckles saw what it was he forced himself the kick in the pit of Wessner's stomach.

"Freckles, Freckles," said McLean's voice.

Every care and trouble drove him out of his mind. He was no more a boy for such a purpose.

—New York Sun.

voice.

Freckles snatched down his sleeve and rose to his feet.

"Excuse me, sir," he said. "You'll surely be believin' I thought myself alone."

McLean pushed him carefully to the seat and, bending over him, opened a pocket case that he carried as regularly as his revolver and watch, for cuts and bruises were of daily occurrence among the gang.

Taking the hurt arm, he turned back the sleeve and bathed and bound up the wounds. He examined Freckles' head and body and convinced himself that there was no permanent injury.

Then he sat down beside Freckles. All the indescribable beauty of the place was strong about him, but he saw only the bruised face of the suffering boy, who had hedged for the information he wanted like a diplomat. Seemed like a judge, fought like a sleek and triumphed like a devil.

McLean pushed him carefully to the seat and, bending over him, opened a pocket case that he carried as regularly as his revolver and watch, for cuts and bruises were of daily occurrence among the gang.

Taking the hurt arm, he turned back the sleeve and bathed and bound up the wounds. He examined Freckles' head and body and convinced himself that there was no permanent injury.

Then he sat down beside Freckles. All the indescribable beauty of the place was strong about him, but he saw only the bruised face of the suffering boy, who had hedged for the information he wanted like a diplomat. Seemed like a judge, fought like a sleek and triumphed like a devil.

As the pain lessened and breath caught up with Freckles' pounding heart, he watched the boss from the fall of his eye, and how long had he been there? Freckles did not dare ask. At last he arose and, going to the case, took out his revolver and the wire mending apparatus and locked the door. Then he turned to McLean.

"Have you any orders, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," said McLean. "I have, and you are to follow them to the letter. Turn over that apparatus to me and go straight home. Soak yourself in the hottest bath your skin will bear and go to bed at once. Now, hurry."

"Mr. McLean," said Freckles, "it's sorry I am to be telling you, but the afternoon's walking of the line ain't done. You see, I was just for getting me feet to start, and I was on good time when I came a gentleman, and we got into a little heated argument. It's either settled or it's just begun, but between us I'm that late I haven't started for the afternoon yet. I must be going at once, for there's a tree I must find before the day's over."

"You plucky little idiot," growled McLean. "You can't walk the line! I doubt if you can get to Duncan's. Don't you know when you are done up? You go to bed. I'll finish your work."

"Niver!" protested Freckles. "I was just a little done up for the pristin' a minute ago. I'm all right now. Ridding boots are away too low. The day's hot and the walk a good seven miles, sir. Niver!"

As he reached for the cutoff he pitched forward and his eyes closed. McLean stretched him on the moss and applied restoratives. When Freckles returned to consciousness McLean ran to the cabin to tell Mrs. Duncan to get the cabin ready and to bring Nellie. That worthy woman promptly filled the wash boiler and set a roaring fire under it. She pushed the horse trough off its base and rolled it up to the kitchen.

By the time McLean came again, leading Nellie and holding Freckles on her back, Mrs. Duncan was ready for business. She and the boss laid Freckles in a trough and poured on hot water until he squirmed. They soaked, rubbed and scoured him. Then they let the hot water off and closed his pores with cold. Lastly they stretched him on the floor and chafed, rubbed and kneaded him until he cried out for mercy. As they rolled him into bed his eyes dropped shut, but a little later they flared open.

"Mr. McLean," he cried, "the tree! Oh, do be looking after the tree!"

McLean bent over him. "Which tree, Freckles?"

"I don't know exact, sir, but it's on the east line, and the wire is fastened to it. He bragged that you nailed it yourself, sir. You'll know it by the bark having been laid open to the grain somewhere low down, and it was \$200 he offered me to be-selling you out—sir!"

Freckles' head rolled over and his eyes dropped shut. McLean's mind traveled back to the night almost a year before when he had engaged Freckles, a stranger.

McLean bent, covering the hurt arm with one hand and laying the other with a curse on the boy's forehead. Freckles stirred at his touch and twiddled as softly as the swallows under the eaves.

"If you're coming this way—tenor—now—be-please to stop over—and we'll repeat the chorus softly."

"Bless the gritty devil," growled McLean.

Then he went out and told Mrs. Duncan to keep close watch on Freckles and send Duncan to him at the swamp the minute he came home. Following the trail down to the line and back to the scene of the fight, the boss entered Freckles' study softly, as if his spirit sleeping there might be roused, and gazed about with astonished eyes.

How had the boy conceived it? What a detour he had wrought in living colors! He had the heart of a painter; he had the soul of a poet. The boss stepped carefully over the velvet carpet and touched the walls of crisp verdure with gentle fingers. He stood long beside the flower bed and gazed at the banked wall of bright flowers as if he could never leave off.

TO BE CONTINUED.

One of the largest professional market letter writers, who three years ago counted his following in thousands, was commencing with himself in the following way: "Several years ago I have been much troubled by a hundred, and, despite special treatments, am still drifting away from my field. It is my wonder that Wall Street operators complain of not being able to make money."

"One possible effect of the Panama canal," says a sugar broker, "is the increase it may have upon sugar prices. At present most raw refined in this country come from Cuba, but when the canal is in operation Hawaii may increase her exportations and become a rather important competitor through better facilities for shipping to our eastern coast. The increase in supply of raws here would have a considerable effect upon prices."

NECESSARILY BRIEF POEM

Every care and trouble drove him out of his mind. He was no more a boy for such a purpose.

—New York Sun.

NEWS TOLD IN BRIEF.

BALTIMORE CONVENTIONS

History Made for the Democrats in the Past in That City.

First of the Dark Horse—Baltimore the Scene of Struggles Between the North and South Before the War.

Baltimore, Maryland, where the first democratic national convention is to meet, was the city in which assembled the first national convention of the Democratic party, the city in which a national convention first gave form to the party's formal platform and in which the first democratic dark horse was nominated for the presidency, says the New York Sun.

At the wish of Jackson the first democratic national convention, which met at Baltimore May 2, 1828, eight months after the Anti-Masonic party had set the fashion of such conventions by meeting in Baltimore for election, but merely ratified the nomination of Jackson for president already made by many State Legislatures. Even at that convention the little rift within the democratic tide that was to be and to make the made made had appeared, for Jackson's candidacy was the well defined quarrel between Jackson and Calhoun and that was the way for the factional struggle to even the Northern and Southern democrats.